

Last Days of Persecution 147

and Ciliciarch in their respective provinces. Maximin developed their powers on the model of those of the Christian bishops, giving them authority over subordinates and entrusting them with the duty of seeing that the sacrifices were duly and regularly offered. He tried to raise the standard of the priesthood by choosing its members from the best families, by insisting on the priests wearing white flowing robes, by giving them a guard of soldiers and full powers of search and arrest.

Evidently, Maximin was something more than the lustful, bloodthirsty tyrant who appears in the pages of Laetantius and the ecclesiastical historians, he dealt the Church much shrewder[™] though not less ineffectual blows than his colleagues in persecution. With such an Emperor another appeal to the faggot and the sword was inevitable, and the death of Valerius was the signal for a renewal of the persecution. This time Maximin struck directly at the most conspicuous figures in the Christian Church and counted among his victims IVU-r, the Patriarch of Alexandria, and three other Egyptian bishops. Methodus, Bishop of Tyre, Basiliseus, Bishop of Comana in Bithynia, and Silvanus, Bishop of Kmesa in Plim-nicia. In Egypt the persecution was so sharp that it drew Saint Antony from his hermit's cell in the desert to succour the unfortunate in Alexandria. He escaped with his life, probably because he was overlooked or disdained, or because the mighty influence which he was to exercise upon the Church had not yet declared itself. This persecution was followed by a terrible